2: McCulloch E-4 (1948-51) 1952 FF13 Mbundu FF13

were polygynous and only one of these contain more than two wives.(1)

The village or isho (plural ovitshe) may consist of from 5 to 500 such households, the heads of which are usually related agnatically to each other. Most, but not all, of the larger villages are olombolo (villages of chiefs or sub-chiefs). These are said to have had formerly as many as 5,000 inhabitants,(2) but today few have as many as 1,000, and there is a general tendency towards smaller villages and even isolated households.(3) There are in general two quite different types of Umbundu village according to the terrain on which they are built. Those on the plains, where there is room to spread out, tend towards a circular shape, with the ocilo and ombanda (see below) near the centre. The various sections of the village may appear as quarters of a single whole, or they may be spread out haphazardly. Mountain villages(4) may have houses built on ledges almost one on top of the other. Where there is often no room or no suitable soil within the palisades for gardens or for the dancing-floor (ocilo), which are found outside the palisade. Different sections of the village tend to string themselves out horizontally along the mountain-side, or to find successive ledges.

The typical village of Ngondo described by Childe, in Kasongi chiefdom, ombumbu (sub-chiefdom) of Ekango, is of an intermediate type, built on a slope. Ngondo has 196 inhabitants, of whom 42 are men, 60 are women, and 94 children. The village is divided into four smaller sections or wards (ovitawilo pl.), of which the largest, that of the village headman (okulu) has 127 inhabitants, while the other three have 19, 13 and 37 inhabitants respectively. The word isho (village) may also be used for either of the two larger sections by themselves. Each section has its own elder, but the dancing-floor (ocilo), which is the centre of village life, is in the headman's section. The ocilo is primarily a place for recreation, but religious functions also are held in it, and formal cases tried. Formerly most villages had a second communal building, the ombanda or "Men's Club House",(5) whose importance was almost as great as that of the ocilo. Here all the men, youths and boys gathered for the evening meal, and here guests were entertained, lesser judicial cases settled, and the day's work and gossip discussed, while young boys, sitting in the background, gained much of their knowledge of tribal history and custom.(6) Today the ombanda exists and maintains its former function chiefly in parts of Ngolangi, Viye and possibly Mbalo. It does not exist in Childe' typical village, where the "Men's Club" holds only occasional meetings on the rocks behind the headman's house, and where the common evening meal no longer takes place. The reason suggested for the disappearance of the ombanda is lack of leisure owing to demands for road work (in the immediate vicinity of Ngondo), for contract labour, involving absences of from six months to a year,(7) and the difficulty of securing tax-money.

(1) And polygyny is thought to be more frequent here than in other areas. See above, p.23.
(2) According to Bayer, 1911.
(3) Childe, op.cit., p.25, fn.1. Childe does not suggest any reasons for this tendency.
(4) Formerly many villages were built on mountains for defence, and capital villages of this type may still be seen.
(5) The "Men's Club" seems to be simply a gathering of all the adult men (and possibly also the juveniles) of the village.
(6) Childe, op.cit.; Cashmore, Intl. Review of Miss., (2) 1934.
(7) Most of the labour on the Benguella Railway to Lobito, and many Ovimbundu travel to the Union of South Africa for work. (Childe, op.cit., p.26, et.al.)

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Continuing at the side the boy and girl cut and plant the

first pole, which is to be a part of the new etambo (spirit hut). The boy and girl must take part ceremonially in each operation of building the hut, and when it is built they ignite the new fire. A hen and a cock are killed, cooked on the new fire, and eaten inside the etambo by all who have taken part in building it. The headman and his wife must remain on the new site to keep the fire alight; other villagers may commute from the old village or erect temporary grass shelters on the new site. Houses are built by the occupants themselves, although men may give each other mutual help, for which there is a gift of food and beer. The onjango is usually built by the communal labour of all boys and men, and on its completion a simple ritual is performed to promote harmony within and to welcome the spirits, who are believed to sleep in the onjango and to take part in all discussions within it.(1)

776 346 361 342 344 [476] [782]

The village group: composition

Childe describes the relationship of the villagers of Ngendo to each other as typical of Umbundu country. Most of the heads of households are related agnatically to their respective section-heads (who are presumably also related agnatically to each other, since the village is based on the clans group); Childe does not however discuss the relation of section heads to each other or to the village headman. He gives a table in which the householders are divided into six categories according to their relationship to their various section-heads:

621 611

1. Patrimonial relatives of section head: Section A (headman's c)
2. Matrimonial relatives of section head: Section B
3. Sisters' sons (or daughters)(2) Section B
4. Relatives by marriage Section A
5. Relationship not definitely known Section B
6. Farmer slaves Section A

621 601

(1) This section is based on Childe, 1949, pp.37-9.
(2) One could, of course, have been included as matrimonial relatives and patrimonial relatives, since they belong both to the clan and to the clans.

3: Hambly E-8 (1929-1930) 1934 FF13 Mbundu FF13

(Plate XLV, Fig. 2). The house of bows for holding sacred relics will be described in connection with religion (Plate XLVI, Fig. 1).

In former days there used to be a hard mud floor for dancing, centrally placed in the village.

In the center of the village is the communal house where all men, and boys over four years of age, gather to eat their food, which is sent by the women. This *osjango* is the place of assembly for discussion of village affairs. A house of this kind at Bailundu is circular in form with a diameter of seventeen feet (Plate XLVIII, Fig. 1). In the middle of the *osjango* are stones forming a fireplace. In another such house there were jawbones of oxen. These were suspended from the walls as tokens of the payment of fines. There is no communal house for females. In some villages there is a common kraal for cattle.

The king's compound usually contains:

(1) The king's house, which invariably has a separate sleeping room.

(2) A house and kitchen for each of his wives.

(3) A tomb for the burial of kings and their wives.

(4) The house of bows for staffs, bows, mats, and tobacco-pipes of dead chiefs.

(5) A house of meditation for the king (Plate LXXXIX, Fig. 1).

(6) Pens for pigs and chickens.

The guest houses (Plate XLVIII, Fig. 2) that I have seen were not in the king's compound. Granaries, which are conspicuous in every village, have been mentioned in connection with food supply (Plate XLIV, Fig. 1). Each house has its own granary. I have noticed garbage pits containing corn husks and refuse from sweet potatoes, but there is as a rule no organized scheme for disposing of refuse; dogs and pigs are the scavengers. There is no particular place for defecation; people use the bush.

Every man has a knowledge of house-building. Women do not actually build, but, along with the children, they pour water into the clay pit and carry clay to the men who are plastering the walls. Ngunga says, "People would be surprised to see a woman building a house. They would call her a he-woman." Men help one another in house-building by giving reciprocal service for which there is a gift of food and beer.

A deep rectangular clay pit is made as close to the house as possible, and the children thoroughly enjoy puddling the clay with their

338 feet. A trench about eighteen inches deep is dug for the poles (akoso), which form the framework. The wattle work is tied to the uprights with strong stripe of red bark before the plastering is begun.
341 The old type of Umbundu house was round, but most of the houses
171 now show a transition to square or rectangular forms (Plate XLIV, Fig. 2).

[531] Exterior wall-painting is found only in the northern districts of Angola (Plate LXXXIX, Fig. 2). Between Saurimo and Malange in the north, rectangular, painted houses are frequently seen. Wall-painting is a cultural trait from the Congo region where that form of decoration is common.

796
621 The method of forming a village site and the right of the chief to allot land have been described. The house of the chief is the first to be erected. There is drinking of beer to celebrate the completion of the village, and the pots of beer have to be stirred with the claws of chickens; these have been killed to provide blood for sprinkling the walls of the new houses. Village chiefs go through the process of stirring and drinking. The medicine-man drinks first, then he offers the cup to the chief.

• 344 The communal house is built by the united efforts of all men of
476 the village. Ngonga says, "The king never helps with any of the
[485] building, but he talks very much." The guest house is also built
644 by communal labor. The king of the ombala of Ngalangi told me that a king always uses the house of his predecessor, which must not be pulled down. No repairs are permitted and the house is used until it is absolutely untenable.

354 The interior of a commoner's house has three hearth stones in the
342 middle of the floor, which is of hard mud beaten down with a heavy wooden implement called ocikondulo. The ceremonial placing of the stones has been described in discussing marriage. There is no chimney, consequently the walls and roof are blackened with smoke. The junction of roof and walls provides pockets for the reception of small articles. On the floor near the walls may be several large beer pots. The dark smoky interior is almost intolerable. The sleeping
352 room is sometimes separated from the living room by matting. The bed is made from a cross-work of sticks supported on four Y-shaped posts, one at each corner. On the bed are coarse sleeping mats and possibly a modern blanket.

356 The miscellaneous contents of the hut are gourds, dippers, cooking
252 pots of several sizes, pounders, and baskets. In many of the huts I found cooking going on in the general room, but frequently a sepa-